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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Sunlight and Shadow.—Since we put away the gun and took to the field-glass I wonder if many a doubtful bird on our local lists, admitted solely upon field-glass observation, could not be traced to the effect of sunlight or shadows. While doing a little collecting recently in the winter woods of southeastern Arkansas this was brought home to me as never before.

The man with the field-glass finds the sunshine one of his greatest drawbacks to identification. It is a good thing to have light on a subject but a very unsatisfactory condition to have a glare of brilliant sunlight on a bird we are endeavoring to identify. And should it be necessary for us to look directly toward the sun, we may find the identification of the species well nigh impossible. What a gorgeous plumage a little sunshine can impart to some dull feathered and commonplace bird! The bird-man afield often finds it necessary to work under conditions that are far from ideal. It is not always possible to keep one's back to the sun and it is generally at the least expected and unprepared-for moment that the prize of the day appears. A living bird is an active creature and rarely is it so accommodating as to sit still long enough for us to make out every detail of its plumage. Possibly ninety-five times out of a hundred our bird moves on before we have clearly seen that one *sure* identification mark. If we are fortunate we may be able to follow it and observe it under more favorable conditions, but the chances are that we have seen the last of it for that day and we have just seen enough to set us guessing. It may be that we caught but a fleeting glimpse of it, or we may have had it under observation for a few seconds, but because of some projecting twig we have failed to see that much desired field mark. No doubt we can name its family and perhaps we are almost certain about its species. We saw enough to be all but *positive* and it takes but a freak of light or shadow to supply that one half hidden spot.

One trouble is that we are too apt to look for the rare and unusual in the bird we meet. We should curb our enthusiasm and imagination and treat every bird we see as the common and to-be-expected species for our locality until we have *proven* it to be otherwise, and when the identity lies in some minor detail, the proof should always be the bird in the hand.

In the cause of accurate observation it might be a good thing if every field-glass student could use a gun at least a few times in his or her life. A gun makes one sceptical and thereby careful. When you identify a bird as this or that with the glasses and then shoot it and find it to be something different, it brings home to you as nothing else can, how very easy it is to be mistaken. I believe that most collectors have had such an experience.

The field-glass observer is often hurt because someone doubts his accuracy in identifying some unusual bird, but no one realizes better than the man who has collected, what an easy thing it is to misidentify a bird, and when the identification rests on some minor point, it is little wonder that he questions it. I believe my own field-glass lists would be larger had I never collected. Many is the bird I leave off my list whose identity I am all but *positive* about.

Down in Arkansas one day I saw a Hooded Warbler; I identified it with the field-glass, but my gun transformed it into a Black-throated Green Warbler, and no one could have been more surprised than I. The sunlight or the shadows had played me a trick.—CHRESWELL J. HUNT, *Chicago, June 2, 1920.*

How Fast Can a Roadrunner Run?—The Roadrunner has gained the reputation of being swift of foot, but is its reputation based on actual swiftness, or merely on the fact that the bird gets from place to place by the conspicuous use of its legs? In his article on "Habits and Food of the Roadrunner in California" (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 17, 1916, p. 27) H. C. Bryant quotes from Heermann that the Roadrunner "may . . . be overtaken when followed on horseback over the vast open plains" and that Heermann "once saw one captured by a couple of dogs." If these statements are accepted, as they will be by most people, not for what they literally say, but for what they imply in regard to the speed of the Roadrunner, they are calculated, I fear, to give one a slightly

exaggerated impression. In describing how fast mice can scoot I could, with a dishonest sort of truthfulness, state that I have seen them run down by automobiles going at sixty miles an hour.

On July 21, 1919, H. G. White and I were travelling by Ford down the Arroyo Seco Canyon, Monterey County, California. Rounding a curve at very low speed we surprised a Valley Quail in the road. Like the Irishman on the track in front of the onrushing locomotive, who said his life would be saved if he reached the switch first, our quail seemed to figure that its only salvation lay in outsprinting the Ford down the road. We gradually increased our speed till the bird was pressed to its utmost and could no longer gain on us. At this stage of the race our speedometer registered 12 miles an hour.

Next day, when en route from Soledad to the Gabilan Range via Stonewall Creek, we had exactly the same experience with a Roadrunner. At the top speed to which we provoked our victim, the famous runner was moving at the tremendous rate of 10 miles an hour on a practically level piece of road.

These two records would be more conclusive if backed up by others of the same kind. Both birds, however, seemed to be able-bodied adults with nothing the matter with their legs, and their speed, it seems fair to believe, must have been not far from average. It would nevertheless be of interest if other ornithological motorists could make similar tests. Considering the propensity of both the Roadrunner and the Valley Quail for getting in the road ahead of machines and trying to beat them to the next turning-off place, it ought to be possible for observers to gather some data on the subject. Is the Quail really swifter than the Roadrunner? Have we any bird swifter—or less slow—than either? For example, how about the Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus torquatus*), or even the barnyard rooster, when urged?

It might be in good order here to urge again the opportunity offered motorists for testing the speed of birds in flight, as already discussed by Alexander Wetmore (Condor, xvii, May, 1916, pp. 112-113). It is of common occurrence for birds, scared up at the roadside, to fly long distances just ahead or abreast of the machine. Some seem to imagine they are thereby escaping from danger. Others *act as if* they considered the thing a sort of game. That suggests another idea: do birds have a game-playing instinct or capacity?—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, June 11, 1920.*

Notes on Some Birds of Santa Cruz Island, California.—Through the courtesy of Mr. F. Caire of San Francisco, the writer was enabled to spend from January 22 to January 26, 1920, on Santa Cruz Island. The following additions to Mr. A. B. Howell's excellent paper on the Birds of the Channel Islands may be of interest.

Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli. Specimens of this subspecies, put by Mr. Howell in the hypothetical list, were taken and identified by Mr. L. E. Wyman. The subspecies seemed about equally numerous with *Z. l. gambeli*.

Hylocichla guttata guttata. A small dark Hermit Thrush was taken and sent to Mr. Swarth. The skin reached him in poor condition, but he writes that he believes it to be the Dwarf Hermit Thrush. This subspecies was also placed by Mr. Howell on the hypothetical list.

Telmatoodytes palustris plesius. A single Marsh Wren taken at Prisoner's Harbor in the only patch of cat-tails seen on the island, was identified by Mr. Wyman as of this subspecies. It has not before been recorded from Santa Cruz Island.

Geothlypis trichas scirpicola. A female of this subspecies of Yellowthroat was taken in the same patch of cat-tails at Prisoner's Harbor. It has not before been recorded from the island.

Sialia currucoides. Mountain Bluebirds, not before recorded from any of the Channel Islands, were observed in three different localities. A scattered flock of over twenty were hovering and feeding on the mesa near Black Point at the west end of the island. Another small flock was seen near the ranch house at the west end, and two birds were seen in the pines in the central part of the main valley.

Nucifraga columbiana. Clark Nutcrackers were reported in the winter of 1919-1920 from many points near the coast, but it is nevertheless surprising that they crossed the twenty-six miles of channel and reached Santa Cruz Island. The birds, called Jack-

daws by the local fishermen and ranchers, attracted their attention as early as October, 1919. These men had never seen them on the island before. Scattered birds were seen by the writer throughout the pine belts in January and again in the first week of April, on a second trip to the island. It is tempting to speculate what might happen if the nomadic impulse had died out after six months and the species should become a permanent resident of the pine forests on the island, in which Crossbills and Red-breasted Nuthatches are already resident.—RALPH HOFFMANN, *Stockbridge, Massachusetts, June 4, 1920.*

A Peculiar Flicker Habit.—For a time a Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer colaris*) enjoyed himself by drumming on a sheet metal air vent on the roof of our house. As a rule he did his drumming early in the morning. One time I caught him in the act of drumming and it was interesting to watch him. The noise sounded very much like a small riveting machine at work.—LUTHER LITTLE, *South Pasadena, California, July 15, 1920.*

Authors Names in the Second Condor Index.—In the Second Ten Year Index to The Condor for 1909-1918, by J. R. Pemberton, full names of authors were included as far as possible. In about 40 cases it proved impracticable to secure the names in full, but about half of them are now known. In presenting these names the opportunity may be taken to correct a few errors which inadvertently occurred in printing the Index. Such corrected names are marked by an asterisk, and names not generally used are enclosed in brackets.

Following are some of the incomplete names in full:

Alexander, Annie Montague	Figgins, Jesse Dade
Bailey, Vernon [Orlando]	Hunt, Richard Montague
Bergtold, William Harry*	Kirn, Albert* Joseph Bernard
Brooks, Allan [Cyril]	McAtee, Waldo* Lee
Bryant, Amy Morrish	McLean, Donald Dudley
Bunker, Charles Dean	Mailliard, Ernest Chase
Buturlin, Sergius Alexandrovich	Palmer, Robert Hastings
Cameron, Ewen Somerled	Vogelsang, Charles Adolph
Dixon, Joseph [Scattergood]	Wetmore, [Frank] Alexander
Dubois, Alexander Dawes	

On pages 7 and 8 of the Index are given full names of authors whose papers appeared in the first ten volumes of THE CONDOR. To this list should now be added Gerald Bamber Thomas and Clark Crocker Van Fleet. Three names in the list require correction, viz., Stephen Alfred Forbes, Frederick Hall Fowler, and William Le Grange Ralph. Examination will show that the first two were inadvertently combined and the last contained a typographical error. These additions leave 31 names in the first Index and about 20 in the second, still incomplete.—T. S. PALMER, *Washington, D. C., July 19, 1920.*

Bryant Marsh Sparrow in the Hills.—In The Condor for March, 1920 (page 63), there is an article by Joseph Mailliard and J. W. Mailliard relative to the breeding of the Bryant Marsh Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis bryanti*) in other than low ground. My records show that a set of four eggs, with nest and parent bird, was taken by H. H. Bailey in San Mateo County, California, on May 1, 1904. The nest was placed on the ground in a slight depression, well hidden by a clump of grass four inches high. The location was almost at the top of a hill, between the bay and ocean, and, as I remember it, three miles or more from the salt marsh. The elevation, I judge, was around 350-400 feet.—HAROLD H. BAILEY, *Newport News, Virginia, July 12, 1920.*

Blue-fronted Jay Nesting in Los Angeles, California.—A number of Blue-fronted Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*) spent the winter of 1919-20 in different parts of Los Angeles and were reported in THE CONDOR from several localities. A group of them lingered late into the spring in Griffith Park where they were noted by the President of

the Bird-lovers' Club of the Southwest Museum about May 5 carrying nesting material. Later they were seen by members of the Audubon Society. On July 9, 1920, the president and two other bird students from the Bird-lovers' Club saw four of these birds in Griffith Park near the Western Avenue entrance. Though fully feathered two of them were evidently young birds, for they had the light colored edges to the corners of the mouth that indicate youth, the soft downy look of new plumage, a different tone from that of the older birds, and they were actually being fed by a mature Blue-fronted Jay. The food given them was a highly sophisticated type for these creatures of the wild, for it consisted of pieces of what upon examination appeared to be an ice-cream cone which had been soaked soft and left on the bank beside a much-frequented trail. The birds however, were evidently used to civilization, for the one feeding paid no attention to the three observers less than twenty feet away, but made several visits to the flat, pancake-like object, tearing off strips and stuffing its mouth as full as possible before flying into a large sycamore tree where it was seen to feed the two young birds. This air of wontedness to civilization in the old bird, and the evident fact that the young birds had not been long out of the nest seem sufficient proof to me that the nest must have been in the immediate neighborhood. It would be interesting to know if this is the first record of the Blue-fronted Jay nesting in the Upper Sonoran Zone in Southern California.—MARY MANN MILLER, *Los Angeles, California, July 10, 1920.*

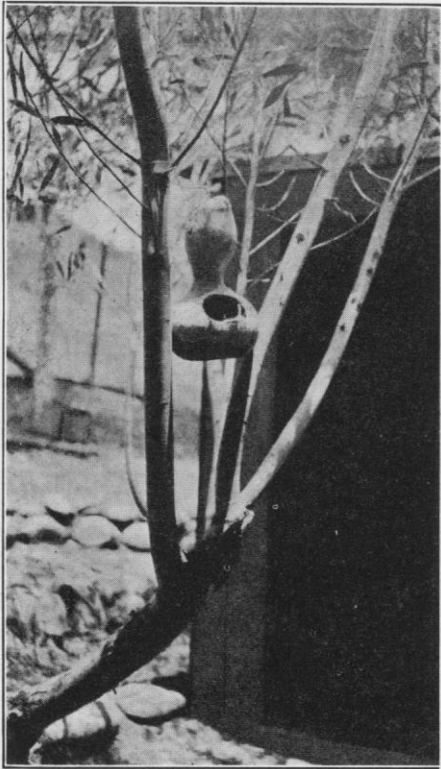


Fig. 38. GOURD USED AS NEST SITE BY A PAIR OF ANTHONY BROWN TOWHEES.

Domesticating California Birds.—

That many of our California birds will become more domestic with the years is evidenced by the experience of the writer. I have put up boxes, cans and gourds about my suburban home and made several drinking fountains in suitable places. For three years a San Diego Wren has occupied gourds near the door. A Black Phoebe has built over the window. An Ash-throated Flycatcher raised a brood in the elbow of an abandoned stove-pipe on an out-house. The Green-backed Goldfinch, House Finch (in boxes also), and California Shrike nest close to the house in orchard trees. A Mockingbird invariably builds in a thick tree in the back yard. The Anna Hummingbird and Arizona Hooded Oriole nest every year in one of my sugar gums. Cliff Swallows build on my neighbor's barn—and feed on my bees.

The Anthony Brown Towhee has often built in an elder bush or orchard tree; but not until last year did one ever use an artificial nest. A bird chose to raise a brood in a gourd hanging on the corner of a chicken yard in the full sun without a bit of shelter near it. Last April another Anthony Towhee (perhaps the same bird) nested in another gourd which was placed in the lower forks of an acacia tree about four feet from the ground. Although disturbed daily this bird raised her brood of four. I have seen scores of nests of Anthony Towhee in low bushes and found one years ago on the edge of a low bank in the grass, but never saw one in an artificial nest until last year—which shows that the birds can learn to get along with people.—CARROLL DEWILTON SCOTT, *San Diego, California, July 15, 1920.*

Clark Nutcracker and White-winged Dove in Southern California.—On a recent trip to the Laguna Mountains, San Diego County, I was rather surprised to find the Clark Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) in flocks ranging from a few birds to fifteen or twenty in the flock. They were on the ground, tearing up the pine needles in search of food. Observed May 31 and June 1.

It may be of interest to note that at least one pair of White-winged Doves (*Melospelia asiatica trudeaui*) is nesting in the vicinity (Brawley). They arrived May 4 and have been about until the present date, June 12.—JOHN C. FORTINER, *Brawley, California, June 12, 1920.*

Interesting Records from the San Joaquin Valley Region.—

Costa Hummingbird. *Calypte costae*. On several occasions in the early spring months while collecting in the arid hills bordering the San Joaquin Valley at a point about due west from Dos Palos, I have found hummingbirds' nests of the previous season's use, built on branches of sage bushes overhanging dry gullies. Those examined have all been unmistakable nests of the Costa Hummingbird and quite typical in both situation and construction. In fact, they differ in no way from nests of this species which I collected in Ventura County in 1916. From this evidence it would seem safe to extend the known breeding range of this species northward along the east slope of these hills nearly to the 37th Parallel.

Hammond Flycatcher. *Empidonax hammondi*. An unseasonable record for this species is that of a male in bright plumage taken in the bottom lands of the Merced River near Livingston, Merced County, on December 20, 1918. The bird was frequenting the inclining trunks of some large, old willows in a rather damp locality. It was active and strong on the wing and no trace of any injury could be found while the skin was being made up. That this Flycatcher had been able to secure an abundance of food was very evident as the skin was reeking with fat.

Dusky Warbler. *Vermivora celata sordida*. On January 8, 1919, I noticed three Warblers which looked like rather dark examples of *lutescens*. They were frequenting some weeds along a drainage canal near Atwater, Merced County. On the 11th of the same month I made a hurried trip to the Merced River near Irwin City, and again encountered three of these birds after special search. The presence of *lutescens* itself would have been interesting at this date but I was convinced that the birds previously seen were *sordida*, and the single specimen taken has been so identified by Mr. H. S. Swarth. This species evidently wintered in some numbers in the San Joaquin Valley during the winter of 1918-19.—JOHN G. TYLER, *Turlock, California, June 30, 1920.*

Nesting of the Blue-fronted Jay in South Pasadena.—During the Christmas holidays my attention was called to a number of Blue-fronted Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*) flying about in a row of large eucalytus trees which form a boundary between our place and the one next to us. The jays were very noisy and were continually chasing the California Woodpeckers about the trees. The jays were seen and heard, from time to time subsequently, which surprised me very much, for at one time I thought they had left for their mountain home.

On Sunday morning, June 6, 1920, I heard a pair of birds scolding and went to see what the disturbance was. My presence on the scene interested the birds and they followed me about while I looked for a nest. I could not find a nest, but while walking about spied a young bird on the ground. This bird was dead and had probably been killed from a fall as it was just about time for it to leave the nest. The bird was saved and is now in my collection. Up to the present time (July 15) the jays are still about. It will be interesting to see if they will be on hand next spring.—LUTHER LITTLE, *South Pasadena, California, July 15, 1920.*

An Ovenbird on the Mohave Desert.—At about 10:45 on the morning of May 18, 1920, I was seated, in company with Dr. Francis B. Sumner, on a pile of bags, boxes, bed-rolls and other items of camp equipment which were stacked ready for transportation from our station at 5 miles south of Lavic, San Bernardino County, California, to Ludlow, about fifteen miles nearer civilization. Our eyes were fixed hopefully on a

black speck, which, accompanied by an inverted image of itself, we had reason to believe was approaching us across the glaring white surface of a dry lake, and would presently resolve itself into the truck which had promised to come for us and our outfit at 10 A. M.

At almost exactly 11 o'clock the truck reached us and came to a standstill beside a nearby windmill and tank of magnesia water, where the driver stopped his engine to cool it off. The truck, alas, was not the one we had ordered. It belonged to a mining company and was on its way into the Bullion Mountains above us.

Nevertheless, it had hardly come to a standstill, when a little bird appeared in the road beneath it, walking about gratefully in the small patch of shade afforded. Dr. Sumner spied the bird first. He seemed to think it odd or unusual, and asked me with interest what kind of a bird it might be. The fact that the bird was *walking*, and in a very teetery fashion, allowed me about two guesses, and I replied that the bird was either a Water-Thrush or an Ovenbird. The bird was tame, and I was soon able to see that the back was green and the crown old-gold. I asked Paul, the truck driver, to keep his eye on the bird while I rummaged through the packed outfit for my gun. Paul did as I asked him, and I am now able to prove to any who might otherwise have been skeptical that the bird *was* an Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*)—a male with testes $5/16$ of an inch in diameter. The study-skin now bears no. 40648, in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

This is the only proved case of an Ovenbird on the mainland of California, though two were observed on the Farallon Islands, May 29, 1911 (Dawson, Condor, XIII, 1911, p. 167), one of which was taken.

I am not properly elated, I fear, at having been placed by chance under the necessity of taking the life of a lost Ovenbird on the inhospitable desert. In fact it seemed the irony of fate that of all birds I should have met this one, whom I have heard sing its ecstatic aerial song by moonlight over the pine forests of Massachusetts in June, and whom I have celebrated in a poem published in "Poetry: a Magazine of Verse."—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, June 11, 1920.*

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

To those interested in the protection and conservation of wild life upon our waters and whose attention has been called to the destruction of sea-bird life by the discharge of refuse oil from the ballast tanks of oil carriers into the water, the news will be gratifying that the only remaining company which persisted in this, the Union Oil Company, has notified the California Academy of Sciences of the cessation of this practice. A letter has been recently received from this company stating that it had completed the installation of ballast tanks to take care of this waste oil instead of pumping it overboard as was the former custom, and that there would be no further cause for complaint. The Audubon Association of the Pacific, the Cooper Ornithological Club and the California Academy of Sciences have fought this indefensible custom so vigorously as to bring about this satisfactory result.

Cooper Club members will be interested in the communication from Mr. W. Leon Dawson, addressed to the Club, as entered in the minutes of the Northern Division (p. 193), and in the Committee's recommendation concerning the subject matter thereof. In accordance with the Committee's suggestion, an understanding has been reached

with Mr. Dawson whereby, agreeable to all concerned, the Cooper Ornithological Club as an organization is no longer identified in any way with the "Birds of California" enterprise. We are assured by Mr. Dawson that prospects are favorable for the appearance of the first fascicle in January next, the plan now being to issue the work part by part.

A contribution of a nature to be exceedingly useful in systematic ornithology has just appeared under the authorship of Richard C. McGregor. This is his "Index to the Genera of Birds", issued March 31, 1920, from the Bureau of Science, Manila ("Publication no. 14", 8vo, 185 pp.). This list, of 8839 names, is rendered in compact form by being printed in small yet comfortably distinct type, three columns to the page, and with citations reduced to the barest essentials. By a special limitation of scope only five previous authors are cited, yet it seems practically certain that every genus name proposed up to 1917 is included. Enough information is given in connection with each name to enable the enquirer to find out all about its history. The amount of work involved in an index of this sort must be enormous. For example, the author states that he gathered 25,000 original reference slips,